

Arts & Culture

Eva Nielsen

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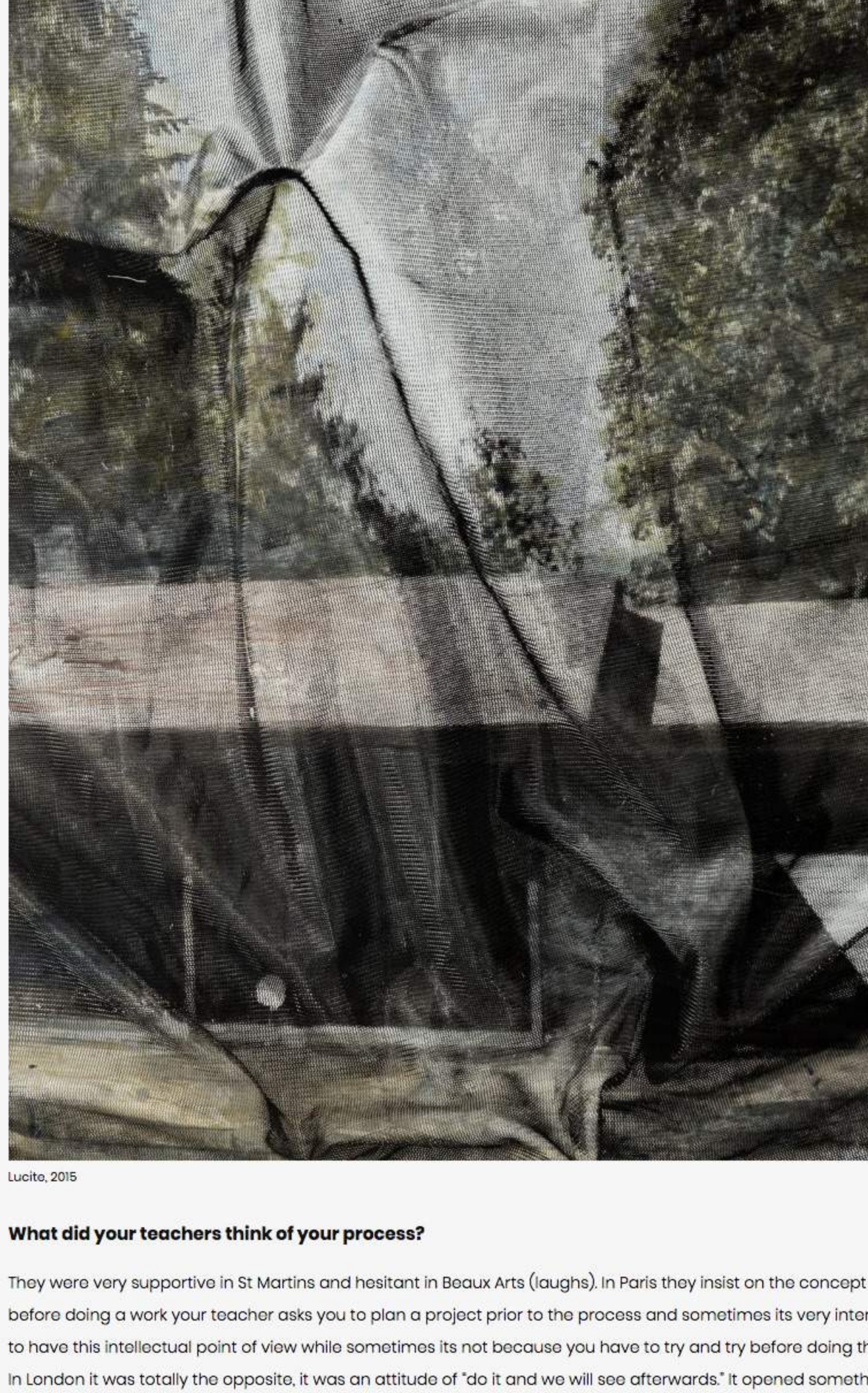
Her paintings are taken from the surrounding scenery, from her backyard to the layered and contrasted landscape of the Parisian suburbs. Her interest lies in transitional spaces and within the process of how she portrays them. Layer upon layer of photos are superimposed and printed upon the canvas, creating spectral shadows and shapes. Some of her works are taken to the garden and left there to let the elements, matters are passing through it, then the surface is scraped and painted over and the dirt blown away. Each painting generates an impression of depth with a skyline, perhaps reminiscent of the Flemish artists that Eva Nielsen admires so much. She counts David Lynch and Hockney as modern inspirations, beside the old great Flemish masters. We discover the artist behind the works.

Ms Nielsen, your approach to painting is the unmasking of transitional spaces and their personality to go beyond what people see at the first glimpse. How does that process work?

Since the Beaux-Arts I was fascinated by both photography and painting. I cannot choose. I think this is an important point. I first noticed a place which I thought was interesting for my work. I love when places have something to say and I'm sure these places have so much more to say than what we expect because it is man-made, it recognises the trace of man. So when I discover a place that is interesting, I come with my camera, I take some photographs, I draw, and then I edit, and I try to find a good combination between several photos and the meaning of this space.

When did this idea first evolve?

I stayed in the Beaux-Arts for three years and then I spent one year in Central Saint Martins in London. What was interesting in St Martins is that they pushed us to experiment, this is where my idea evolved.



Lucite, 2015

What did your teachers think of your process?

They were very supportive in St Martins and hesitant in Beaux Arts (laughs). In Paris they insist on the concept and before doing a work your teacher asks you to plan a project prior to the process and sometimes its very interesting to have this intellectual point of view while sometimes its not because you have to try and try before doing the work. In London it was totally the opposite, it was an attitude of "do it and we will see afterwards." It opened something in me, and I tried and tried. You do good and bad stuff, which is life. And at the end you have a decision to make.

Do you remember the first space that you carried through with your work?

It was definitely in the suburbs. I was fascinated in both Paris and London. I was doing some research, and I discovered the suburbs was not very defined and had possibilities. So I took my car and drove around everywhere possible in the Parisian suburbs. I did the same in London, and it was easier to find these places in London; you take the train and you are already there. London is not a city that is closed, it's in a process, and so you can still find interesting places.

Would you consider your works inspirational of a particular photographer or painter?

That's funny because in painters I am very classical and crazy about the Flemish school and the beautiful skies, as seen in paintings by Vermeer for example. All the colours are intense and the sense of time is very strong.

Do you think a painting can be inspirational without those strong colours?

I need the colour and the process. Colour is an important factor in painting. You have to be a good colourist. It is very important for me. We were talking about David Lynch and then I love Lars Von Trier, because the use of colour is so important for them. You feel the colour. Vermeer, for example, was very good at this, the Flemish artists were very good, it was intense, strong and very personal.



Template II dessin, 2016

So what was it like growing up with a painter in your family?

(Laughs) oh sometimes it was funny and sometimes it was not. His studio was fascinating for me, and we were very welcome in it. We had all these possibilities to go and draw and have this evidence of drawing and painting. He taught me many things, but sometimes it was difficult because he was my father and it is always difficult to learn from your parents.

And what does your father think of your work now?

That is funny, at the beginning he questioned the process like "you are doing that like that" and he was very surprised because he himself was not working with big canvases and I had all these discussions with him, but he understands and likes it now.

Are there special attachments/memories with the spaces you portray in your works?

All the places, research and photographs are very personal because these places that I have seen, home that I have felt in all my senses. However if I have to choose one, it's this one particular space that was close to my place which I saw every day and five years later I did a painting of it.

How are your friendships connected with your professional life?

When you are at school you definitely learn more from your fellow students than from your teachers as you have these long discussions. I still need these discussions because contemporaries have known my work for a long time. They are not afraid of me and so they can say "no do this and mix it with this." Now as an artist, I don't think you can be isolated. We have all these connections and different nationalities, and we can look at our work in a collective form. It's definitely important for me.

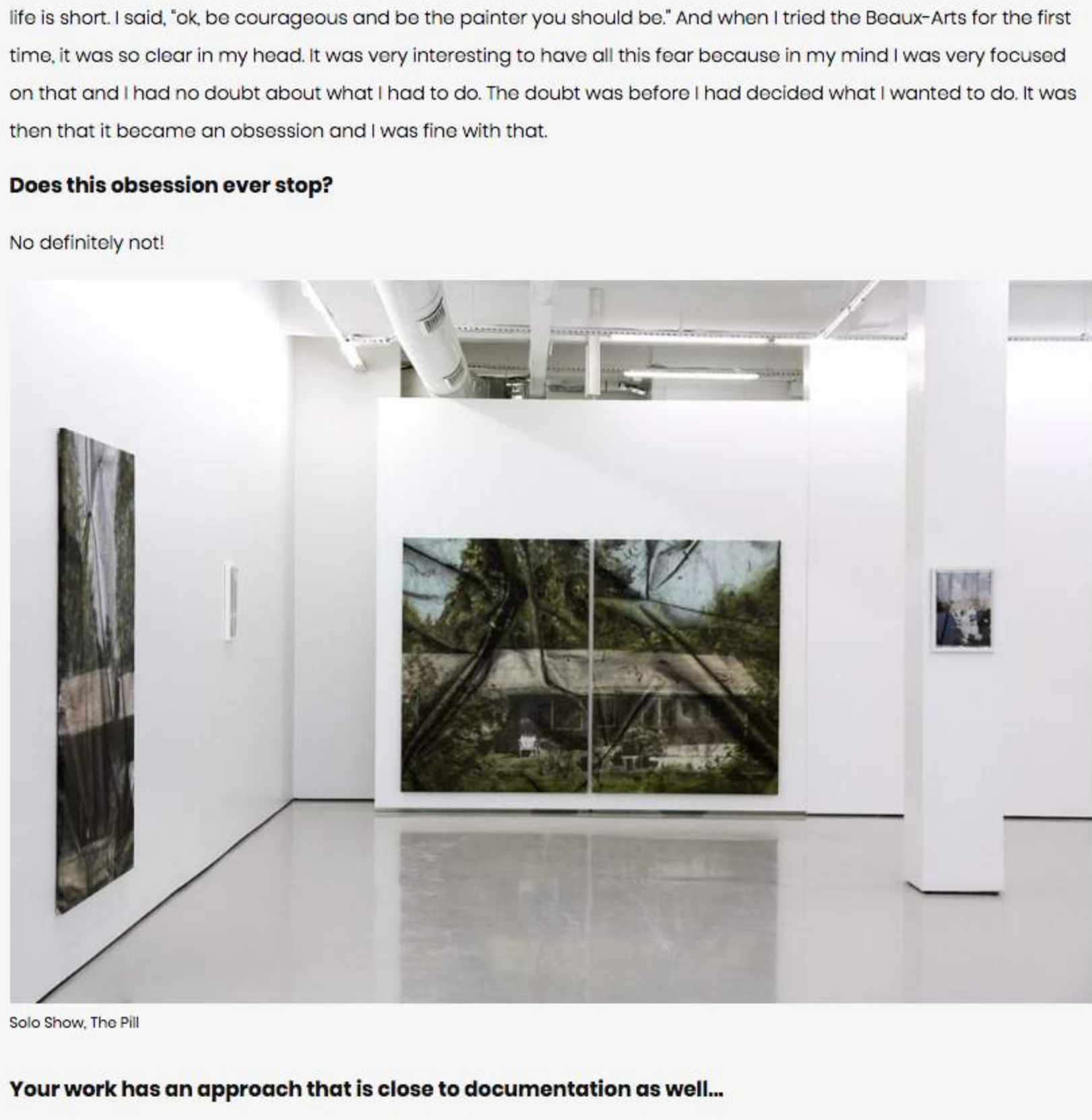
Do you remember the earliest memory of when you wanted to do what you do today?

From the beginning, it was something strong but I was very afraid of it and because my father was a painter, I knew it was not an easy path. So I was like, "oh fuck, I know I'm going to be an artist and it will be so hard."

At the beginning I wanted to make something very different. Before the age of 22, I tried to focus on history and literature in the Sorbonne, but I knew that it was not my place. When I was 22, I had a friend who died and I thought, life is short. I said, "ok, be courageous and be the painter you should be." And when I tried the Beaux-Arts for the first time, it was so clear in my head. It was very interesting to have all this fear because in my mind I was very focused on that and I had no doubt about what I had to do. The doubt was before I had decided what I wanted to do. It was then that it became an obsession and I was fine with that.

Does this obsession ever stop?

No definitely not!



Solo Show, The Pill

Your work has an approach that is close to documentation as well...

Yes I think so. For example this summer I was in the Balkans for one month, in Macedonia because I was very interested in the various architecture existing in that part of the world. Especially brutalism, which is very strong and powerful and linked to social and political aspects. It was very interesting. We call Skopje the capital of brutality in Macedonia, therefore it was very interesting to go there and take many photographs. There were many stories there. So yes, I have a documentary approach. I need to see it myself, take photos, make drawings and to capture something exiting in that space.

So this is your future work?

Yes, I've already done three paintings from this and I want to do more.

“ I'm burning for that. People want to be fascinated, and so we have to have art, we have to see art. Its something so important.

When does a work of art become important in your opinion?

When it's disturbing. When you don't understand the image straight away, you are in front of something that happened and you do not know if you like it and if you feel something in the colour, your senses and you do not know how to analyse it. And I love this moment of being lost, because everything is so rational around us, so calculating. Sometimes in art, you can loose yourself in something that you don't understand. I'm crazy about this effect. When you go to a museum to see a masterpiece, you have this feeling; you do not have all the keys. It's a specific moment; it's like a drug.

And do you think there are many artists or pieces that have this effect today?

It's not the same for everybody, but for example when I bring friends to see Flemish art, its very uncommon for nothing to happen to their senses. There is this in contemporary art but maybe its more prominent in paintings, and that's why I chose to be a painter. When you look at a masterpiece in a museum, the time has done its process; time is a choice in pieces. For example there was this painter, Bouguereau, who was very popular for his period, he was very rich and his paintings were not very incredible. Now you do not see his paintings because time makes the choice between what's considered good and bad. But look at Vermeer, he was totally forgotten about for centuries and then he was re-discovered.

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